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TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Mideast
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Key stories in the media:

Yediot writes that PM Sharon is expected to call on PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas today at the AIPAC convention in Washington to coordinate positions with Israel ahead of the disengagement. Leading media quoted Sharon as saying at a meeting with leaders of the organization Israel Bonds Monday that his government "will not negotiate Jerusalem" and that it will not make any concessions over "the Israeli capital, which is united and indivisible for eternity." Sharon was also quoted as saying at the same meeting that, contrary to the opinion of the defense establishment, he believes that Israel must leave the Philadelphi route along the border with Egypt. Yediot quoted him as saying at the meeting: "Without offending the Arab world, it must be said that their [the Arab leaders'] agreements, declarations, and speeches are not worth the paper they are written on. It is better to sign agreements with President Bush than with the Arab world."

Israel Radio quoted Secretary Condoleezza Rice as saying Monday before the AIPAC convention that Israel and the Palestinians must fulfill their commitments in accordance with the road map. Dr. Rice issued a call to Israel's Arab neighbors to open the door towards normalized relations with Israel.

Jerusalem Post quoted Abbas as saying at a meeting with Labor Party and Yahad (Meretz) politicians that he intends to ask President Bush, at their meeting on Thursday, for assurances that implementation of the road map will begin as soon as Israel completes its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Abbas was quoted as saying in an interview with Jerusalem Post: "My goal on this trip is to succeed in getting American support for the road map and for peace." Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa was quoted as saying Saturday in an interview published Sunday in Jerusalem Post that he would like the Israeli people to carefully examine the Saudi initiative for normalization of relations with Arab states because "the Arab people want peace."

Leading media reported that Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz met with PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef Monday to discuss a number of pending issues, including measures the PA intends to take to restore calm, coordinating disengagement, and an update on disarming fugitives in Tulkarm and Jericho. The media reported that Yousef presented Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz with a Palestinian plan towards the implementation of the disengagement plan. According to Yediot and Israel Radio, Mofaz rejected the plan, saying it is insufficient, shallow, and superficial. Israel Radio and Maariv noted that Mofaz requested that the PA submit "proper and serious plans that include details of how they will be implemented on the ground." Maariv reported that Mofaz and Yousef agreed to establish two new coordination mechanisms ahead of the disengagement -- one at the ministerial level, the other one comprised of officers from both sides. Yediot quoted Brig. Gen Yossi Kuperwasser, the director of IDF Intelligence's Research Department, as saying a few days ago that Abbas treats terrorists as heroes and therefore refuses to disarm terrorist organizations, to

punish terrorists, and to put an end to arms smuggling.

Internal Security Minister Gideon Ezra was quoted as saying in an interview with Jerusalem Post that the final cutoff date for the evacuation from the Gaza Strip is the eve of Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) on October 3. Ezra maintained that 1 billion shekels (around USD 228 million) would be saved if the settlers agreed to evacuate "quietly" and on their own accord without police and army intervention.

Yediot and Israel Radio reported that the Hebron Hills Regional Council plans to set up 40 new residential units at the Mitzpe Yair outpost, near the settlement of Sussiya.

Leading media reported that GOI officials admitted on Monday that arrangements to relocate settlers are at an impasse. Ha'aretz reported that a group of Katif Bloc (Gush Katif) farmers has reached an agreement with Disengagement Administration head Yonatan Bassi to receive 1,000 dunams (around 223 acres) of agricultural land from Kibbutz Karmiya in the western Negev, in addition to land the settlers will receive near their new homes in exchange for the land they leave behind. The newspaper says that the agreement was made despite a decision by A-G Menachem Mazuz.

Jerusalem Post reported that Israeli officials told EU anti-terrorism coordinator Gijs De Vries on Monday that Israel is increasingly concerned about a growing European trend to want to either establish or strengthen ties with Hizbullah and Hamas. Yediot reported that Israel has requested clarifications from the UK regarding reports according to which it will resume contacts with Hamas, following the group's strengthening in local elections, and assessments that the strength of Hamas will grow even further in the PA's legislative elections. In a different development, Yediot reported that the GOI is incensed over a new textbook in Spain, which compares the separation fence with the Holocaust. Jerusalem Post also reported that on Monday, the Foreign Ministry protested the inclusion of an anti-Israeli poem in a Norwegian matriculation exam.

Israel Radio reported that on Monday, UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan announced that UN officials have verified the Syrian troop withdrawal from Lebanon. The radio also reported that Secretary Rice told the AIPAC convention that the U.S. will not rest until Syria completes the troop withdrawal, referring to Syrian intelligence forces that continue to operate in Lebanon.

Ha'aretz reported that the Palestinian Election Commission informed Abbas on Monday that parliamentary elections cannot be held on July 17, as planned, because the commission is not yet ready.

Yediot and Jerusalem Post quoted Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez as saying Monday that his country will soon develop civilian nuclear technologies to assist Iran.

Ha'aretz reported that Egyptian playwright and satirist Ali Salem, who has paid a heavy price for his conciliatory attitude toward Israel, will arrive in Israel next week to receive an honorary doctorate from Beersheva's Ben-Gurion University. The university said it chose Salem "as a sign of deep esteem for an important playwright, writer, and satirist whose talent and courage has earned him his reputation in Egypt and throughout the Arabic speaking world."

All media reported that on Monday, members of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee lambasted FM Silvan Shalom against the background of his sour relations with Israel's Ambassador to the U.S. Danny Ayalon and the alleged involvement of his wife Judy Nir-Mozes-Shalom in ministerial appointments.

Leading media reported that retired Maj. Gen. Uzi Dayan will head a new political movement -- "Tafnit - An Agenda For Israel" -- that will work on a strategy to change the nature of political discourse in all aspects of public life in Israel.

Leading media reported that associates of outgoing IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon have started a web site sharply criticizing Mofaz.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized:
"Israel should be interested in Abu Mazen receiving political guarantees from Washington, which he can then present as part of his election campaign to the Palestinian parliament."
Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (May 24):
"As long as terror continues, there is no possibility of pursuing the path of peace. President Bush is aware of this. One can only hope that he will properly explain it to Abu Mazen."

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in the editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "This flammable mixture of political procrastination, bureaucratic sloppiness, practical helplessness and the ideological zealotry of a few who are willing to do anything, is liable to turn disengagement into a practical and national nightmare."

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Center's Global Research in International Affairs Center, columnist Barry Rubin, wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Uncritically putting a Western template onto the contemporary Middle East leads to remarkable distortions, and a failure to understand the present or predict the future."

Block Quotes:

I. "Guarantees For Abu Mazen"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (May 24): "Abu Mazen is currently asking Washington for a road map to the road map: guarantees that the stages and processes that the sides agreed on both in the road map and at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit will not merely be adhered to as a gesture of good will but will become mandatory policy in which the U.S. plays the chief role. Abu Mazen has the feeling that Washington is dragging its feet with regard to everything that has to do with giving backing to the Palestinian side. This feeling grows stronger in the face of the achievements that Abu Mazen can already present [the United States] with, the most important being the cease-fire between the armed factions and Israel and the chance of turning Hamas into part of the political fabric of the PA. These are still fragile achievements.... But Israel ... is quick to see in this ... a sign that Abu Mazen has failed miserably. This is the reason for the conclusion by some of Israel's policy-makers that Abu Mazen is not a worthy partner and that therefore there is no point in trying to coordinate the pullout from Gaza with him, and that the PA is not worthy of receiving political guarantees from the U.S. This conclusion is both hasty and unmerited. Israel has an interest in coordinating the withdrawal with the Palestinian Authority as well as in seeing Abu Mazen leading the diplomatic process even in the political pressure cooker in which he finds himself. Therefore Israel should be interested in Abu Mazen receiving political guarantees from Washington, which he can then present as part of his election campaign to the Palestinian parliament."

II. "The Abu Mazen-Bush Meeting"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (May 24): "Alongside disagreements, many points, which don't always match Israel's positions, have been agreed upon toward Abu Mazen's visit [to Washington]... This no doubt is an important meeting, a very significant one from the Palestinians' point of view -- of course if they provide their contribution to the progress of the peace process in the region. At this time, one would be hard-pressed to say that they have fulfilled their duty.... One can only hope that, during his talks with the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, President Bush will skillfully explain to him that in order to advance in the direction of peace, which we all yearn for, one must first and foremost disarm the terror organizations and ensure a stable cease-fire; only then will it be possible to sensibly start talks to push the peace process forward. As long as terror continues, there is no possibility of pursuing the path of peace. President Bush is aware of this. One can only hope that he will properly explain it to Abu Mazen."

III. "Nothing Is Ready"

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in the editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (May 24): "Approximately a year and a half have elapsed since Prime Minister Sharon first revealed his plan for a full withdrawal

from the Gaza Strip and the evacuation of all the Israeli settlements. Eighteen months are, by all accounts, a long enough time to find all the answers to all the practical questions entailed in evacuation: when will it begin, when will it end, where will the settlers move, which of them will agree to move without violence, how much money will each family receive, what should be done with the buildings, who will be in charge of the border crossings, etc. etc. However, even today, three months away from the assumed (and temporary) date when disengagement is to begin, there are no satisfactory answers to any of these questions. Not only has the fate of the buildings not been decided, neither has the fate of the people been decided.... This flammable mixture of political procrastination, bureaucratic sloppiness, practical helplessness and the ideological zealotry of a few who are willing to do anything, is liable to turn disengagement into a practical and national nightmare."

IV. "Mideast Fantasies"

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Center's Global Research in International Affairs Center, columnist Barry Rubin, wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (May 24): "Uncritically putting a Western template onto the contemporary Middle East leads to remarkable distortions, and a failure to understand the present or predict the future.... A second element here is a tendency to acceptance of regional ideology as truth.... The situation has reached the point that many students studying the Middle East in European or American colleges get largely the same messages and understanding of the region they would receive if they were attending universities in Damascus or Teheran. Finally, the culture-denying mind-set includes a strong streak of utopian and wishful thinking. It is not true that if people want peace or democracy, or prosperity or international fraternity they should begin by assuming these things can be quickly or easily achieved.... What is especially dangerous here is that once people get starry-eyed about how everyone is moderate, ideology does not matter, extremism is a figment of the imagination, and evidence to the contrary is rejected.... These are the real difficulties facing a more accurate Western perception of the Middle East. Unless they are confronted and addressed, the common pattern of recent years, in which misunderstandings produce disasters and crises, will continue."

12. Israel-U.S. Relations:

Summary:

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "What is being threatened is the right of any community to lobby on behalf of American interests as it sees them without being tarred with a taint of dual-loyalty reminiscent of other countries and eras."

Block Quotes:

"Put Up or Shut Up on AIPAC"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (May 24): "Anyone who has ever attended AIPAC's policy conference, particularly from other countries where Jewish communities are free but lie low politically, is astounded by the confidence, organization and display of democratic power. Each year, it is a celebration of a community that revels in the democratic game and represents the epitome of the unique American tradition of popular participation in politics and government. That this year has been no different is no small triumph over the small, dark cloud that has hung over the entire event. The cloud, as far as we can tell, stems less from something that two AIPAC employees may have done and more from the sense that, somewhere in the bowels of the U.S. government, what AIPAC does, indeed what AIPAC is, is suspect.... There comes a point when the investigation itself becomes suspect, and when elected officials begin to wonder whether the mantle of national security is being illegitimately used to trample civil rights and engage in bureaucratic warfare.... AIPAC is a proud American institution and deserves better from a government and Congress which so lavishly praise its work. Any organization can have its lapses, but what is being threatened is the right of any community to lobby on behalf of American interests as it sees them without being tarred with a taint of dual-loyalty reminiscent of other countries

and eras. Its accusers should put up or shut up, so that an organization with 100,000 loyal American members can go about its democratic business."

KURTZER